

**PLEASE BE AWARE THAT
THIS PLAY IS FULLY PROTECTED BY COPYRIGHT**

All plays, books, music and other materials published by Heartland Plays, Inc. are fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries which the United States has reciprocal relations including, but not limited to all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, The Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention. All rights to the plays and materials on our website are strictly reserved including, and without limitation, professional and amateur performance rights; motion pictures; public reading; radio and television broadcasting; audio and video recording and reproduction of any type known or yet to be invented; information storage and retrieval systems of any type known or yet to be invented; and the rights of translation into any and all languages. No individual or organization whether amateur or stock may perform this or any play published by Heartland Plays, Inc. without first obtaining advance permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. and paying the appropriate fees including Royalties and Single-Use Copyright fees. Heartland Plays, Inc. collects royalties on behalf of the Playwrights whose plays it publishes. Unauthorized copying, transcribing or reproduction of this or any play or excerpt, or storage or transmittal in any form and by any means whether known or yet to be invented, is strictly forbidden except as provided by Agreement with Heartland Plays, Inc. Any unauthorized use is a violation of copyright laws and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

FIVE SIMPLE RULES TO REMEMBER

1. DO take advantage of the free online perusal of our plays to help you make the best choice for your particular needs or production.
2. DO enjoy the convenience of our online purchase application for performance rights and single-use copyright.
3. DO understand that this play and all plays and materials on our website are controlled by Heartland Plays, Inc. and fully protected by copyright.
4. DO NOT attempt in any way to copy, transcribe or reproduce this play by any means or perform this play or use any play or material from our website without first receiving permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. Any attempt to use this or any other work without first obtaining permission is a violation of copyright and punishable by law.
5. DO NOT rob this Author or any of the Authors we represent of their right to be paid for the use of their property. It is a crime and it is wrong!

Product Code A0851-SP

The Best Call

A 10-Minute Comedy
by
Pat Pattan

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
REPRODUCTION WITHOUT SPECIFIC WRITTEN PERMISSION
PROHIBITED**

**Performance Rights Available Exclusively through
Heartland Plays, Inc. at heartlandplays.com
playsnow@heartlandplays.com
customer service: 406-431-7680**

Copyright © 2016 by Pat Pattan

The Best Call

by Pat Pattan

CHARACTERS

1W / 1M

SUSAN BASSET: *A woman making cold calls for a Department store to potential credit card customers*

DAN SILVA: *The man on the other end of her latest call*

TIME

The 1980's

The Best Call

by Pat Pattan

SETTING: The stage is split. Stage Right has a desk and chair, representing a home office. Stage Left; a hallway table and small chair. On top of the table is a phone attached to a land line, a note pad and a pen. There is a kitchen off.

AT RISE: SUSAN BASSET sits at her desk Stage Right. There is an open phone book and a few loose pages of paper on the desk. She has a land line phone in one hand and a pen in the other. The phone on Stage Left is ringing. She taps her pen on the desk impatiently.

SUSAN

(Imitating the ringing)

Ring, ring, ring—I know this is going to be another "no answer". It figures—I told the store nobody stays home on a Friday night, but they didn't listen. So now I'm stuck sitting here while everybody else is out having a good time.

(She looks at her watch)

Speaking of time, it's 7:15 already. I can't call after 8, but if I make it quick I may be able to get three more calls in.

(She checks the phone book.)

I'd better take a look at this call's name - D. S. Silva. What the heck does D. S. stand for? I don't know if it's a male or female. Everybody knows that trick. Women don't want people to know that they're living alone. I tried it myself, but it didn't work. I never got so many crank calls in my life. This is 1980—by now you'd think somebody would invent a way to tell who the caller is before you pick it up. But what am I saying? I'd be out of a job. Nobody wants to talk to a telemarketer. It's going to be a woman... Ring, ring, ring—she probably has a date and I'm sitting here—

All lights up. DAN, wearing an apron, is standing with the phone in one hand and a pot holder in the other. He looks nervously behind the screen.

DAN

Hello?

Taken by surprise, SUSAN straightens up and prepares for business by picking up her pen.

SUSAN

Hello, my name is Susan Basset and I'm calling for Shirmers Department Store. I—

DAN

Dan Silva here. Oh, no—Mt. Vesuvius just erupted!

DAN drops the receiver on the table and runs behind the screen. SUSAN holds the phone away from her ear as it clunks. The muffled sound of a pan lid is heard as it hits the floor.

SUSAN

What the heck is going on there? I'm on with a nutcase who thinks he's in Italy.

DAN returns, stretching the phone cord so he can see behind the screen.

DAN

Can we make it quick?

SUSAN

(Stammering)

I...I called to see if you—

DAN

The lava is reaching the floor!

DAN drops the receiver with a clunk again and runs behind the screen. SUSAN holds the receiver out and stares at it, screwing up her face.

SUSAN

I think I should hang up and call 911. This guy either needs the fire department or a psychiatrist. I'm glad I'm on this end.

He comes back with a mop in one hand and a sponge in the other and balances the receiver on his shoulder. At the sound of action, she perks up again.

DAN

(Out of breath)

Sorry about all this...I got it under control. It's a mess, but I'll deal with it later. You were saying?

He plops on the chair, dropping the mop and sponge.

SUSAN

What did you do with the dog?

DAN

What dog?

SUSAN

You know, the Saint Bernard that came with his little keg to rescue you from Mt. Vesuvius.

DAN

(Snorting)

Glad to see one of us has a sense of humor. I wish there were a keg—I might need it for strength when I start cleaning up. Now where were we?

SUSAN

You were all over the place; I was trying to explain why I called.

DAN

Okay, give me your spiel.

SUSAN

I'm calling for Shirmers Department Store. I—

DAN

Let me guess. You called to sell me a new stove. Where do I sign?

SUSAN

I'm not selling stoves, I'm introducing the new "Silver Shirmers" Credit Card.

DAN

You're too late. I cut up all my cards when my wife divorced me. I don't need one.

SUSAN

This one's different. You get lots of perks with it. They give—

DAN

She was the start of all my problems.

SUSAN

Who?

DAN

My ex-wife. She did all the cooking. I relied on her; never learned how to cook.

SUSAN puts her pen down and crosses her arms.

SUSAN

And how is that *her* fault?

DAN

(Crossing his arms)

Hey, you're trying to sell *me* something. You're supposed to be on *my* side.

SUSAN

Thanks for reminding me. Now, back to Shirmers.

SUSAN straightens up and picks up the pen.

DAN

It wasn't all my ex-wife's fault though.

SUSAN

How refreshing—a man who admits his mistakes.

DAN

I have to blame my sister too. She spoiled me with her home cooking.

SUSAN

Let me get this straight. The actions of your ex-wife and your sister were the underling cause for Mt. Vesuvius to erupt?

DAN

Most emphatically, yes! They got me so used to good food that microwaving a can of franks an' beans just didn't do it for me anymore. I had to try to cook for myself. Tonight I found a recipe for short ribs and peppers over rice. I started with the rice.

SUSAN

That sounds easy enough.

DAN

You'd think. Here's where things went wrong. When I saw how much water there was and how little rice, I thought the package directions were wrong. I wanted a lot, so I threw in an extra cup of rice.

SUSAN

(Rolling her eyes)

Rice expands.

DAN

I wish I had known that before the lid blew off.

SUSAN stifles a laugh.

SUSAN

So that's what the crash was. Did it hit the ceiling?

DAN

No—but it missed the skylight by a hair.

SUSAN

(Condescending)

Cooking rice successfully is one of the most complicated feats. That's why the inventor of Minute Rice became very rich.

DAN

That's like using potato buds. It's cheating. I want the real thing. No box mixes for me.

SUSAN

It just takes a little practice, that's all. Maybe you should invest in a rice cooker. They're kind of foolproof.

DAN

You must think I'm really stupid for not knowing how to cook rice.

SUSAN nods her head up and down in agreement.

DAN, *Continuing*

You see, my wife left me two years ago, and it kind of devastated me. I didn't want to live alone, so I moved in with my sister and her family. What with eating out and her home cooking, I was spoiled. When they moved out of state last month, I was forced to fend for myself. I wish they had cooking classes for boys like they did for girls when I went to school.

SUSAN

Schools don't offer required cooking classes any more - budget cuts. Boys and girls learn how to build bird houses.

DAN

Hey don't knock bird houses—that's what I made.

SUSAN

Good for you. At least the birds are well fed.

DAN

I'm not—I've taken my belt in two notches since I started cooking.

SUSAN

Maybe you should open up a cooking school for people trying to lose a few pounds.

DAN

Good idea. What do you think I should call it?

SUSAN

Well, considering this attempt, how about “Disastrous Dan's Weight Loss Cookbook”?

They laugh.

DAN

Yeah, the sub-title could be: “Not for the Feint of Heart”.

Another laugh.

SUSAN

That’s good, Dan—not bad for an on-the-spot collaboration. How about we put in some line drawings? My favorite cookbooks are the ones with illustrations. With Mt. Vesuvius on the cover, it could be a landslide sale!

DAN

Very punny! I like the way you think. How about being my publicist? But, I guess you wouldn’t have time for that. Didn't you say you worked in a department store?

SUSAN

I don't work *in* Shirmers, I work *for* them making calls to introduce people to their new "Silver Shirmers" Credit Cards. I—

DAN

You mean you work out of your home? How much do you make for each call?

SUSAN

Twenty bucks, but that’s only if I sell a card.

DAN

Don't tell me you support yourself on this—I'm sorry, you're probably married and padding the family wallet a little. Go on, I won't interrupt any more.

SUSAN rolls her eyes and clasps her hands heavenward.

SUSAN

That’s okay, it’s my turn for a little personal stuff. I'm divorced too and I am trying to pad my wallet a little, except that I’m the only family here.

DAN

This doesn’t seem like too dependable a job, especially when you get people like me on the phone.

SUSAN

You got that right. I just spent three hours tonight and I made one sale. Thankfully, I only have to do this until September.

DAN

I don't get it. If you have another job, why do you do this?

SUSAN

Because I work with a school ten months of the year and I eat twelve months.

DAN

Ah, so you're a teacher. I always thought they had it easy working only ten months a year.

SUSAN

Think again. Look up the average teacher's salary.

DAN

What do you teach?

SUSAN

Promise you won't laugh.

DAN

I'm holding my hand over my heart as we speak. (*Demonstrating*)

SUSAN

(*Laughing heartily*)

I teach advanced culinary arts at a training school for chefs.

DAN

What! Now I feel really out-classed! How could you keep a straight face while I was describing my debacle?

SUSAN

I've been trained to muffle my laughter.

DAN

I wish I could have seen your face. Somebody should invent visual phones.

SUSAN

I'm sure that will happen in a couple of years. I'm not looking forward to it though. I don't often answer the phone with full make-up on.

DAN

Come to think of it, I don't either.

THEY both laugh.

SUSAN

You're pretty funny. I'm almost feeling cheery after feeling sorry for myself for sacrificing my Friday night.

DAN

I suppose your boyfriend was put off about that.

SUSAN

I don't have one at the moment, but nice fishing, Dan.

DAN clears his throat and sits straighter. SUSAN twirls her hair around her finger.

DAN

Obvious, wasn't it; back to topic: You probably have a dozen cookbooks on the market, since you're a culinary expert.

SUSAN

I wish—recipes I have, ideas I have. I even have photos of my students' creations, but I'm afraid it will never get published.

DAN

Wait a minute. You have an idea for a book of recipes that your students created, plus photos. Do you know how valuable that is? You're sitting on a gold mine!

SUSAN

I'm glad you think so, but it's not that easy. Now that you know all about me; back to topic: I need to know if you want to sign up for the card or—

DAN

Why not?

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes